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ABSTRACT

By participating in the 2-week mini-course, high school students will learn that (1) there is a difference between political terror and other criminal activity; (2) governments as well as nongovernmental groups engage in political terrorism; (3) political terrorism has been present throughout history; (4) political terrorism is a world wide problem; (5) a personality profile of a typical member of a terrorist group exists; and (6) there is no best strategy for governments to use in dealing with terrorist groups. Teaching strategies include role playing, analysis of data, case study analyses, oral presentations, research, and classroom discussion. All materials and background information necessary to teach the basic course are included; however, to implement some of the follow-up activities, access to outside resources, such as novels, is necessary. (RM)

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POLITICAL TERRORISM:

A MINI-COURSE

FOR

HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES

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Political terrorism is a significant problem that affects people all over the world. Fortunately, a body of information now exists that teachers may draw upon to increase their students' understanding of political terror. The purpose of this article is to examine several generalizations concerning political terrorism that have been inferred from scholarly research, and to suggest related methods and materials which the secondary social studies teacher may use in teaching an introductory unit or mini-course about terrorism.

Most students of political terrorism agree with the following generalizations: political terrorism is different in important ways from other criminal activity; governments as well as non-governmental groups engage in political terrorism; political terrorism has been present throughout history; political terrorism is a world-wide problem; a personality profile of a typical member of a terrorist group exists; there is no best strategy for governments to use in dealing with terrorist groups.

SUGGESTED MINI-COURSE ABOUT POLITICAL TERRORISM

Overview

It is suggested that approximately two class weeks be allowed for the following series of lessons. Examples of teaching and learning strategies suggested include: role playing; analysis of data; case study analysis; student oral presentations; and student research.

The Difference Between Political Terror and Other Criminal Activity

Educational Goal - Students will contrast political terrorism with other criminal activity.

Methods - Role playing and teacher and student analysis of political terms relevant to the study of terrorism

It is ironic that even though the term "terror" was first defined as the employment of violence to achieve political goals, (in reference to the Jacobin Regime in France), the media and many governments classify the political terrorist as an ordinary criminal. Although the common criminal often employs terrorist tactics, (some kind of violence or the threat of it), two distinctive characteristics of political terrorism separate it from conventional criminal activity:

1) Perpetrators of political terrorism act to achieve political goals, i.e., creation of a new state, supression of a dissident group.

2) In most examples of political terrorism a few people are victims, but often entire populations or a government constitute the real target. One scholar calls this characteristic of terrorism coercive intimidation.[1] (An IRA bombing in London kills a few people but sends the British government and population the message that the political status quo in Northern Ireland is unacceptable to the IRA).

You can help your students differentiate between political terrorism and ordinary crime by presenting the following scenarios for class discussion and analysis. The teacher might want several students to act out the incidents for the class.

Scenario 1 - Mary is returning home alone at night from a late movie when a large man grabs her and shoves her into the nearest alley. Pulling a knife out, Mary's assailant states gruffly, "If you don't give me that diamond ring you're wearing, I'll cut your throat!"

Scenario 2 - A bomb is placed in the United States Embassy in a small Third World country. It goes off and several Americans are killed. A group that wants no American presence within the country claims responsibility for the bomb.

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[1]Michael Stohl, (ED) The Politics of Terrorism. New York: Marcel Rekker, 1979.

Several appropriate questions to stimulate class discussions are: What are the similarities between these scenarios? The differences? What are the probable goals of the mugger and the terrorist group? After an activity such as this, students should understand the "political" component of political terrorism, and the concept of coercive intimidation. Knowledge of these terms is the key to understanding the differences between political terrorism and ordinary crime.

Follow-Up Activities - Still another characteristic separating political terrorists from ordinary criminals is that the former are motivated to act because of ideological beliefs. The introductory phase of a mini-course about terrorism seems an appropriate time to introduce students to political terms such as ideology, and to explain the relationship between these concepts and the actions of a terrorist. A list of suggested terms includes:

Radical
Liberal
Moderate
Reactionary
Ideology
Status-Quo
Nationalism.

Governmental and Non-Governmental Terrorism

Educational Goal - Students will distinguish between governmental and non-governmental terrorism.

Methods - Case study examination and values analysis.

Selective torture was a common practice of the late Shah of Iran's government. Anti Shah dissidents were arrested, tortured, and then released to re-enter society to make other Iranians aware of the fate of

those who challenged the existing order. Selective torture is only one of numerous terrorist tactics many governments employ to send political messages to their citizenry. Although most of the literature on political terrorism focuses on the actions of non-state groups (IRA, PLO), students need to understand that governments also can engage in terrorist acts.[2] The similarity of purpose and method that characterizes state and non-state terror can best be illustrated to students through case studies.

There are numerous examples of state and non-state terrorist activity which teachers may use as source material for case studies. Two sources the author suggests are The Crowned Cannibals by Reza Baraheni[3] and "Dream of Terror" by Jon Bradshaw.[4] The former is a first-hand account of the atrocities of the late Shah of Iran's Government, and the latter is an excellent account of the evolution and activities of the Baader-Meinhof Gang.

Two short handouts summarizing the political objectives and terrorist actions engaged in by the Shah's Government and the Baader-Meinhof Gang should be prepared and given to students. After your students read the case studies, the following questions are suggested for class discussion:

1) What terrorist acts were committed by the Iranian government/Baader-Meinhof Gang?

2) What were the political objectives behind these acts?

3) Why were terrorist actions used instead of non-violent tactics?

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[2]Stohl.

[3]Reza Barheni, The Crowned Cannibals: Writings on Repression in Iran. New York: Vintage Books, 1977.

[4]Jon Bradshaw, "The Dream of Terror." Esquire. July, 1978, pp. 24-50.

A discussion based on these types of questions should help students to better understand political terrorism and to recognize that governments as well as private groups employ political terror.

Follow-Up Activities - When the definition of political terrorism is applied to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki a case can be made that the United States Government engaged in terrorist tactics since there were no outstanding military targets in either city, and the United States used the weapons in order to send a message to the Japanese Government. In order to check students' understanding of state terrorism, the teacher might wish to have the students learn background information about the atomic bombings. After this activity students could engage in a debate about the bombings. Two suggested questions for discussion are:

1) Was the U. S. Government's use of the atomic bomb in World War II an example of state terror? Why or why not?

2) Are there political situations in which government use of terrorism is allowable?

Political Terrorism in History

Educational Goals - Students will recognize, through historical study, that political terrorism is not a new problem.

Methods - Student research, oral presentations and class discussion.

Political terrorism is often treated as a post-World War II phenomenon by the media. This treatment is inaccurate since history

offers numerous examples of movements and governments that employed terror.

In order to better understand the problem, students need to develop a historical perspective about political terror. The teacher might wish to have teams of students do research and present oral reports to the rest of the class in order to illustrate how prevalent political terrorism has been throughout history. A sample annotated list of examples of political terror in history is provided below.

Political Terrorism During the French Revolution - The Jacobin period in particular offers numerous examples of state and non-state political terrorism.

The European and American Anarchist Movements of the Nineteenth Century - Anarchists of various political persuasions advocated, and in some cases, carried out acts of political terror during this period. Students can find examples of political terrorism ranging from group actions such as the Narodnaya Volya's operations against the Imperial Russian Government to individual acts such as Leon Czologosy's assassination of William McKinley.[5]

The Irish Republican Army - Examples of Irish political terrorism may be found from the Tome Rebellion of 1798 to the present.

Stern and Irgun: The Mid East in the 1940's - When the operations of these determined bands of Israelis are examined, the definitional question of terrorist or freedom fighter is almost certain to arise.

The FLN in Algeria: 1950's - The FLN operation against the French is regarded as one of the few examples of successful non-state terrorist actions in history.[6]

The Ku Klux Klan in the United States - Examples of Klan political terrorism may be drawn from the 1870's, the 1920's, and the 1960's.[7]

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[5]See Barbara Tuchman's Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War 1890-1914, Macmillan, 1966, for an excellent chapter on the anarchists.

[6]See Stohl for information about Israel and Algeria.

[7]For both a historical and contemporary overview of the Klan see Wayne King's "Violent Rebirth of the Klan," New York Times Magazine, December 7, 1980, pp. 150-160.

The Weatherman in the United States - The burnings and bombings of ROTC buildings in the 1960's are examples of political terrorist actions engaged in by this group.[8]

Follow-Up Activity - The teacher might also wish to have some students find incidences of political terrorism in literature. Examples of novels containing terrorist incidents include:

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens
Trinity by Leon Uris
The Quiet American by Graham Greene.

The World-Wide Problem of Political Terrorism

Educational Goal - Students will recognize the international dimensions of political terrorism.

Methods - Student research, oral presentations, construction of visual aids.

In 1981 Pope John Paul was shot by a terrorist. In the same year thousands of miles away, the Government of El Salvador employed terror against portions of its citizenry. Examples of political terror similar to these abound all over the world. Students can be impressed with the international dimensions of the problem through researching contemporary state and non-state terror.

The teacher can divide the class into two groups, and provide one group with a list of countries which employ state terror, while giving the other students a list of terrorist organizations. Each student could then find information about his or her terrorist government or group.

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[8] See John Kifner, "Vandals in the Mother Country," New York Times Magazine, January 4, 1970, pp. 14-28.

The following is a list each student may use as a research aid:

Terrorist Group (or Government)
Geographic Area
Ideological Characteristics
Reasons Why Terror is Employed (Goals)
Types of Activities
Internal Support
Foreign Support
Group Size.

After members of the class complete the assignment each student might be given two to four minutes to report his or her findings to the class. The class might also wish to construct a world terrorist map for display.

Follow-Up Activities - The question of whether certain governments are sponsors of international organizations of terrorists is an intriguing one. Students who are expecially interested in terrorism might be encouraged to examine samples of the growing literature on this subject. Claire Sterling's Terror Network: The Secret War of International Terrorism, (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1981), is a lucid presentation of the argument that an international terrorist network exists.

The Typical Terrorist

Educational Goal - Students will examine data that allows one to draw generalizations about the "typical" terrorist.

Methods - Student completion of a multiple choice test about the personality profile of the "average" terrorist.

Several studies dealing with the psychology of terrorism provide us with a composite profile of a typical terrorist. There are, of course, major exceptions, but the political terrorist is more often than not a young, single, middle class male who is a university student or graduate and who

resides in the city.[9] A technique you might want to employ to teach students about the personal characteristics of political terrorists is a lesson in which their pre-conceived notions of terrorists are compared to psychological profiles of an "average" terrorist. Give the students a copy of the following multiple choice form to complete:

Personality Profile of a 20th Century Terrorist

1. The individual will be:

   A. Young (18-35)
   B. Middle aged (36-50)
   C. Old (50 or above)

2. The individual will have the following amount of education:

   A. Elementary school
   B. Some secondary school
   C. Some college
   D. A college degree

3. The individual will be from the following socio-economic class:

   A. Lower
   B. Working
   C. Middle
   D. Upper

4. The individual will have:

   A. An extensive criminal record
   B. Little or no criminal record

5. The individual will be from:

   A. An urban area
   B. A rural area

[9]Charles A. Russell and Bowman H. Miller "Profile of a Terrorist," Terrorism: An International Journal, Volume 1, Number 1, 1977.

6. The dominant ideology of the modern terrorist is:

   A. Communism
   B. Nationalism
   C. Fascism
   D. Anarchist

7. The dominant sex of the modern terrorist is:

   A. Male
   B. Female

8. Political terrorists are likely to be:

   A. Single
   B. Married

After student responses are tabulated, make the following set of data available to your students:

Terrorist Profile

1. Young - 18-35
2. University student
3. Middle class background
4. Little or no criminal record
5. Urban resident
6. Marxist or Anarchist or Nationalist Ideology
7. Male
8. Single

Examples of questions you can ask to enable students to better analyze the data include:

1) What is the median age of the terrorist?

2) Are most terrorists relatively well educated?

3) How would the personality of terrorists possibly affect the actions of the groups?

Follow-Up Activities - Although composite profiles are useful in helping us understand terrorism, they can mislead students. There are a number of groups whose typical members constitute major exceptions to the above profile. Two such organizations are the Ku Klux Klan and

the IRA. The teacher or members of the class might wish to use available sources to formulate profiles of members of these groups. Class discussion about why the members of these terrorist organizations are different from other terrorists could then take place.

Students who are interested in learning more about psychological characteristics of terrorists should be encouraged to examine the Bradshaw account of the Baader-Meinhof Gang referred to earlier in the article. The psychological make-up of the official who carries out government terror is dealt with by Jacob Timmerman in "Reflections: No Name, No Number," an account of the interactions between Timmerman and the representatives of the Argentine Government that imprisoned and tortured him.[10]

The Complex Problem of Government Response to Political Terrorism

Educational Goal - Students will understand that when dealing with terrorist organizations, there is no one "best" government response strategy.

Method - Simulation.

Although governments have used strategies ranging from a hard-line, no negotiations approach to complete capitulation to terrorist demands, research reveals that no one response strategy works best in every situatio

[10]Jacob Timmerman, "Reflections: No Name, No Number," The New Yorker, April 20, 1981, pp. 45-119.

Several questions governments face in dealing with terrorists include: Should the justice of a terrorist group's cause be factored in when deciding how to respond? Should governments violate the civil rights of citizens in searching for terrorists? If hostages are involved, should their lives be the primary concern of government?

The following role playing exercise for students should illustrate to them the complex question of response. Present this scenario to your class:[11]

> "You are to imagine yourselves as special advisors brought to the State Department on an emergency basis to make recommendations on a grave crisis. Early this morning, our time, a United States diplomat, a part of his family, and his personal secretary were kidnapped in the Middle East. Your job will be to make policy recommendations to handle the problem. You are to report your recommendations to the President."

You could also construct a list of possible options for groups of students to consider as well as add more detailed events to the scenario. It is important in debriefing to require groups of students to cite rather detailed reasons for their recommendations. By doing this, the class will again be presented the major arguments for and against various response strategies.

Follow-Up Activities - Three important values questions should be addressed when discussion occurs about response strategies. They are:

1) Should the justness of a group's cause be factored in by government authorities when they consider various responses to a terrorist action?

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[11]George Lopez, "Teaching About Terrorism: Notes on Methods and Materials" Terrorism: An International Journal Vol. 3, 1979.

2) To what degree would democratic societies limit the civil rights of citizens when dealing with the problem of political terrorism?

3) If hostages are involved should their lives be the top priority of the government?

The purpose of this article is to provide a guide for the secondary social studies teacher who wishes to teach students a set of concepts and skills that will increase their ability to release to political terror from a rational and informed perspective.

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